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ABSTRACT

The apprenticeship system in the United States is primarily a private institution, separate from vocational-technical schools. Apprenticeships establish their own guidelines as to the required course of study. Apprentices do not get licensed unless they successfully complete a written and practical exam. Culinary apprenticeships vary. Many large restaurant and hotel chains often provide training for new employees. The most widely recognized apprenticeship is that of the American Culinary Federation, which many secondary and postsecondary schools have adopted. Apprenticeships allow individuals to receive skilled training on the job while earning a salary at the same time. The deemphasis on academics also makes them attractive. For too long a high priority has been placed on earning a college degree, although for many jobs it is unnecessary. Thus, the nation may be at risk of falling behind some European counterparts who today maintain a very disciplined program of culinary apprenticeship. Many U.S. culinary schools do have practicum or internship programs, but the amount of time spent on internship is not long enough to instruct and evaluate students properly. More evaluation and collaboration are needed between the faculty and chefs in the field to whom students are assigned. A combination of postsecondary vocational education for more diversified students and apprenticeship for high manual skill levels would create a blend valuable to the industry. (YLB)

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POSTSECONDARY VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS VS APPRENTICESHIPS
IN AMERICAN CULINARY ARTS

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It was not until Catherine de Medici arrived in France in 1533, bringing with her private chefs, did the French cuisine that we know today have its start. The result of other aristocrats wanting to duplicate foods tasted at the royal banquets created a need for more trained culinary personnel. As time past a more sophisticated method of training had its beginning. This is what we would refer to today as the modern apprenticeship.

Although cookery began with man's harnessing fire, it was not until the middle ages that it began to become a refined art. Varenne, trained in the French court, was the first to develop what we know today as French Cuisine. It was during this period of time in Europe, that craft guilds began to set up what is known today as apprenticeships.

Apprenticeship, Funk and Wagnalls describes, "is a system of learning the skills of a craft by working with experts in the field for a set period of time." In the early days of apprenticeships students were indentured for long periods of time, working under a master craftsman. Most of the apprentices were 14 years of age or younger. By comparison, today most begin training between the ages of 18 and 24.

The first legislation in this country promoting apprenticeships was in Wisconsin in 1911. It was in 1937 that the National Apprentice-ship Law was passed. The

purpose of this law was "to promote the furtherance of labor standards of apprenticeship ...to extend the application of such standards by encouraging the inclusion thereof of contracts of apprenticeships, to bring together employers and labor for the formulation of programs of apprenticeships to cooperate with state agencies for the formulation of standards of apprenticeship." The apprenticeship system in this country in present times is primarily a private institution. The majority of the apprenticeship sponsors remain quite committed to remaining entirely private and separate from vocational technical schools. Today these sponsors are comprised of trade unions, corporations, and professional groups. The role of the sponsor is as follows: "funding, designing, administering, and registering the training program". Various apprenticeships establish their own guidelines as to the course of study required.

Many of our training programs today have become very sophisticated. It has also been found to be a very effective teaching method. When an apprentice is given a work assignment, he/she has to think out a problem and then perform the manual task. These apprentices also do not get licensed unless they successfully complete a written and practical exam. The result of this is that all licensed craftsman whether they be plumber, electrician, machinist, etc. should have a basic competency which insures the perpetuation of quality craftsman.

Culinary apprenticeships vary somewhat in America today. Many of our large restaurant and hotel chains often provide training for new employees. For chefs this includes a two year program learning all phases of the operation, as prescribed by corporate heads.

The most widely recognized apprenticeship is that of The American Culinary Federation. This program as described in the Apprenticeship Operation Manual of the American Culinary Federation, is a 6000 hour work commitment. Recognized throughout the food industry, this program is also endorsed by the U.S. Department of Labor, who awards a certificate to the apprentice upon successful completion of the program. However, this type of training is not mandatory in the foodservice industry.

There has always been a need to provide man with some type of skills. Americans today more so than other parts of the world put an extremely high value on a college degree. The attainment of a degree in a specific skill does not always guarantee that an employer will hire a graduate that can demonstrate total mastery of his/her trade. With the rising cost today of tuition, college education may become an unattainable luxury for many. Yet, our need to find employment will not change. A viable alternative to this would be an apprenticeship program. This allows individuals to receive skilled training on the job while at the same time earning a salary.

Another strong point which makes apprenticeships attractive is the de-emphasis on heavy academics. Many students do not like to be in a classroom but do very well in areas which concentrate more on practical, hands on application rather than theory. At the same time, valuable job experience is being gained and if successful, may lead to a permanent position upon completion of the program.

So well structured is the program devised by the American Culinary Federation, that it has been adopted by many vocational secondary and post-secondary technical schools. Graduates from this program are also recognized and respected. The ACF Apprentice is highly regarded throughout the industry. The only downside to an apprenticeship program is that if the student only trains at one property then they do not receive the exposure that they may receive at a large culinary school such as Johnson and Wales University, The Culinary Institute of America, The New England Culinary Institute, The California Culinary Academy and many more.

In evaluating the educational programs for culinary professionals, as opposed to apprenticeships, we may be failing by allowing students to graduate from programs without high levels of proficiency. Many students arrive at the job sought with little or no idea of how to perform many rudimentary tasks. We have for too long placed a high priority on earning a college degree, and for many jobs it

is unnecessary and nothing more than a status symbol. For this reason we may be at risk of falling behind some of our European counterparts who today maintain a very disciplined program of culinary apprenticeship. The German apprenticeship system is still one of the finest apprenticeship programs in the world today.

Many of the above mentioned culinary schools do however have practicum or internship programs. My experience having worked with these students is that the amount of time spent on internship is not long enough to properly instruct and evaluate these students. Also, there needs to be far much more evaluation and collaboration between the school faculty and the chefs in the field to whom these students are assigned. Perhaps two years of culinary education are not enough to develop the skills that are demanded by industry today. Johnson & Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island has just graduated its first students from their four year culinary arts program. Only time will tell what impact this program will have on these students.

Lastly, with funding becoming more difficult for vocational programs, thought should also be given to providing only the basics in vocational education. This would leave the more technical aspects up to industry. This would allow employers the ability to train their own people in the style best suited for their needs. When comparing apprenticeships to post-

secondary vocational programs, we often find the apprentice with higher manual skill levels. The post-secondary student, however, is found to be much more diversified as a result of the instruction in theory as well as practical application. Therefore, a combination of both would create a blend more valuable to the industry.

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